

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to the research, discussing several key aspects. First, the background of the problem explains why the topic is important to discuss and research. Second, the research question includes questions that formulate a particular problem or issue that is to be studied in a study or research project. Third, this section outlines the purpose of the research. Fourth, it addresses the limitations and aspects that restrict the research's scope. The fifth component is the significance of the research, which explains the necessity for the study and its expected contributions. The sixth is key terms. Key terms were used to explain the main concept, idea, or topic, which is the focus of the discussion.

1.1 Background of the Study

In learning a foreign language, especially English, four basic skills need to be mastered, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening is a basic skill that needs to be mastered first because listening skills have an important role in building the foundation of English communication. Rost and Wilson (2013) define listening skills as an active process that involves real-time information processing, including word recognition, understanding sentence structure, and concluding the contents of the message. Nation and Newton (2009) define listening as a natural precursor to speaking; the early stages of language development in a person's first language (and in the naturalistic acquisition of other languages) depend on listening. When someone often listens, he will be exposed to more language, this exposure will be the process of language acquisition (Peterson, 2001). In conclusion, the possession of proficient and effective listening skills is widely

recognized as a critical factor contributing to the successful process of second language acquisition.

Richards (2008) underlines the importance of English listening in language learning, arguing that it offers the input required for language acquisition and allows learners to engage in spoken communication. Students must consequently obtain relevant and meaningful input through listening in order to demonstrate intelligible meaning. According to Brown (2001), listening is a crucial skill in English, particularly for students, because it is an essential component of the language. It means that the relevance of listening can be determined based on the students' ability to hear the English language and extract information from what is heard.

Considering the importance of listening skills, in the English Education department at one university in Jambi, this skill is taught in four levels of courses over four semesters, combined with speaking skills. One of the courses is Listening and Speaking for Professional Purposes, which is given to third-semester students. In this course, students learn how to understand and respond to communication in professional contexts, such as job interviews, presentations, discussions, and meetings. Specifically in listening skills, students are trained to be effective listeners in the work environment, for example, when listening to information in meetings or understanding the content of presentations.

However, many students still experience difficulties in listening skills. This can be seen from their scores, which tend to be low in the listening section compared to speaking, when the researcher asked several people who took the listening and speaking for a professional purposes course. These difficulties are generally caused

by the diverse accents of the speakers, the high speed of speech, and a lack of understanding of formal vocabulary. When faced with these difficulties, some students overcome them by noting down the main ideas while listening to the audio so that they can more easily remember and understand the important information being conveyed. However, some students still experience difficulties even after identifying and noting down the main ideas during the listening activity. This challenge is often caused by the density of unfamiliar vocabulary in the audio material, which disrupts their concentration and hinders their overall comprehension during the listening process.

By considering the difficulties experienced by students in this course, especially in listening skills, and the strategies they have tried to overcome them, the researcher is interested in discussing more deeply the difficulties they experience and what strategies they use to overcome these difficulties they feel into a study entitled “Students' Challenges and Strategies in Improving English Listening Skills for Professional Contexts”.

In line with this, a study conducted by Aulia (2021) identified several challenges encountered by first-semester students in listening comprehension. These challenges include difficulties in understanding the main idea, extracting specific information, making inferences, and evaluating content. Furthermore, students often have difficulty concentrating, especially when asked to answer several questions simultaneously or when listening to a text or dialogue while completing a task. While previous research provides an overview of listening comprehension issues among first-semester college students, this study narrows the focus to explore listening challenges in a professional context. This approach aims to provide a more

in-depth understanding of how specific listening skills are applied and the barriers learners face in real-world professional scenarios.

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by students when developing listening skills for professional contexts, which include material beyond interpretation. Therefore, the researcher proposes the title of this study as “Challenges and Strategies of Students in Developing English Listening Skills for Professional Contexts.” This study aims to identify the challenges students face in improving their listening skills in a professional context that affect the effectiveness of listening skill learning. By understanding the challenges they face, it is hoped that strategies can be found to help students improve their listening skills more effectively.

1.2 Objective of the Research

This study aims to describe the challenges that students face in improving their listening skills within a professional context, and to explain the strategies they apply to overcome those challenges.

1.3 Research Question

Based on the background described above, the research question is:

1. What challenges do students face in learning to listen for professional contexts?
2. What strategies do they employ to enhance their listening skills in professional contexts?

1.4 Limitations of the Research

This study investigates the challenges faced by students in improving their listening skills in professional contexts and the strategies they use to overcome them. The limitation of this study lies in its very participant focus, which only examines students who have recently completed the course Listening and Speaking for Professional Purposes.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This study aims to identify the challenges faced by university students in learning English listening skills in a professional context, as well as the strategies they use to overcome these challenges. By understanding these challenges and strategies, this research is expected to provide a basis for formulating more effective learning solutions. This research has important significance, especially for students who are learning English for professional purposes, because it can help them recognize barriers and effective ways to improve their listening skills. In addition, the results of this study are also useful for lecturers in designing more targeted teaching strategies, especially in the Listening for Professional Purposes course.

1.6 Definition of the Key Terms

Based on the title of this research and the background that has been described, the following is the definition of key terms from this research:

a. Listening Skills

Listening skills in English refer to the ability to accurately receive and interpret spoken language. This skill is crucial for effective communication, as it enables

individuals to understand messages conveyed by others, facilitating meaningful interactions. Listening involves more than just hearing; it requires active engagement and cognitive processing to convert sounds into comprehensible language.

b. Linguistic Challenges

Challenges refer to obstacles, difficulties, or hurdles that must be faced and overcome in order to achieve a specific goal. According to Vandergrift & Goh (2012), challenges in language learning include various factors that can influence the learning process, such as speaking speed, limited vocabulary, different accents, difficulty understanding implied meaning, and psychological factors such as anxiety or lack of confidence. In listening, particularly in a professional context, challenges that may be encountered include difficulty in understanding foreign vocabulary, high speaking speed, and differences in accents among those being listened to. Additionally, understanding meaning that is not explicitly stated also poses a barrier.

c. Learning Strategies

Strategies are approaches, techniques, or methods used by participants to overcome obstacles when listening to verbal information related to the professional world. These strategies include cognitive aspects, such as utilizing prior knowledge and sharpening focus, metacognitive aspects, such as planning and evaluation while listening, and socio-affective aspects that help participants feel more confident and interact effectively. By consciously applying these

strategies, participants can enhance their understanding of important messages in professional settings, such as meetings, presentations, and work discussions, thereby improving the effectiveness and efficiency of their listening skills.

d. Professional Contexts

Professional context refers to situations or environments related to the world of work, where communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills are essential for individuals to interact and function effectively. In this context, listening skills are an important part of professional communication because they focus not only on understanding speech but also on interpreting the meaning, intent, and emotions of the speaker in work interactions. This differs from listening skills in an academic context, which place greater emphasis on understanding lecture material, presentations, or theoretical scientific discussions. Therefore, listening in a professional context is more applicable, contextual, and oriented towards the practical needs of the workplace, while listening in an academic context tends to focus on understanding academic content for the purposes of learning and mastering knowledge. There are also more complex difficulties in a professional context, which makes this context slightly more difficult than an academic context.